

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: APRIL 24, 2008

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TESSIER
O'CONNOR
SHEEHAN
BENTLEY
KENNY
THOMAS
STRAINER

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

ROBERT PHELPS, COMMISSIONER
MICHAEL JABAUT, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE
SERVICES
KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL
SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SUPERVISORS CHAMPAGNE
STEC
TAYLOR
JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE
& FISCAL SERVICES
TODD LUNT, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. O'Connor and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the March 28, 2008 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Phelps, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members. *A copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Phelps began by presenting several requests for approval of in-State travel to attend necessary training, which he outlined as follows:

- 1) CPS (Child Protective Services) Supervisory Core Training program to be held on July 22 - 24, 2008 and August 5 - 7, 2008 in Albany, NY
Employee(s) to attend: Tammy Breen
- 2) CPS Response Training program to be held on June 23 - 27, 2008 and July 7 - 11, 2008 in Albany, NY
Employee(s) to attend: Tammy Breen and Penelope Barlow
- 3) Child Care Subsidy Training Program to be held on May 20 - 21, 2008 in Albany, NY
Employee(s) to attend: Allison Millis and Grace Maranville
- 4) CW (Child Welfare)/CPS Common Core training to be held on May 5 - 9, 2008; May 19 - 23, 2008; June 3 - 6, 2008; June 16 - 20, 2008 and June 30 - July 2, 2008 in Albany, NY
Employee(s) to attend: Elizabeth Ross
- 5) CW/CPS Supervisory Core Module 1 training to be held on June 4 - 5, 2008 and June 17 - 19, 2008 in Albany, NY
Employee(s) to attend: Tammy Breen

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve all of the travel requests, as outlined above. *Copies of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Phelps advised that Agenda Item 1 referred to a review of items pending from prior Committee meetings, the first of which pertained to a request that he contact Christine Freire, Director of Case Management at the Glens Falls Hospital, to determine the total number of Warren County resident patients awaiting Medicaid eligibility results. He reminded the Committee that this information had been requested pursuant to the receipt of a letter from David G. Kruczynski, President/CEO of the Glens Falls Hospital asking for assistance in expediting the Medicaid application approval process; *a copy of this letter can be found on file with the minutes from the March 28, 2008 Committee meeting.* Mr. Phelps stated that he had attempted to contact Ms. Freire for the desired information, but had been unable to obtain it because she was on vacation. Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, apprised that he had spoken with Ms. Freire and had found that many of the figures listed in the letter received from Mr. Kruczynski were inaccurate. He noted that in their discussion, Ms. Freire had advised that the Medicaid application process in Warren County took twice as long as it did in Washington County; however, Mr. Payne said, he questioned this statistic as it could not be confirmed.

The second pending item, Mr. Phelps advised, pertained to a request for data regarding DSS staffing and he distributed reports pertaining to the matter, copies of which are on file with the minutes. He advised that the first handout, entitled "Temporary Assistance", reflected the scope of transactions that DSS Examiners engaged in while processing benefits, as well as the total number of transactions performed, broken down by program.

Mr. Phelps stated that the second handout, entitled "Warren County Department of Social Services - Workforce Assessment", incorporated the program transaction figures from the first handout into one activity report to reflect the total transactions in 2007 for all program areas. He noted that the second page of this handout reflected the transaction time for each program action, as based on the New York State Touche/Ross Works Measurement Study. Mr. Phelps said that the third page of this handout reflected that the total available working hours for each employee was 1,408 hours per year, accounting for breaks and holidays, as well as accrued personal, vacation and sick time. Mr. Phelps concluded that through this analysis he was able to determine that the current DSS staffing was adequate to support the services required of the Department. He noted that the problem they continued to face was the necessity for overtime authorization due to the number of staff members on medical leave, as well as vacancies caused by staff turnover and delays in filling the positions.

Mr. Payne pointed out that Mr. Phelps' report reflected an average use of 89 sick hours per employee per year, which he deemed excessive. Mr. Phelps replied that the majority of this figure could be attributed to those employees out of work on medical leave, who had exhausted their sick time for the year and were using accumulated time from prior years. He added that these employees were principally affected by adverse conditions in the DSS Building. Mr. Payne asked if this figure included those employees on compensation disability and Mr. Phelps replied affirmatively.

Mr. Champagne asked if the figure representing sick hours used was standard and Mr. Phelps replied in the negative, explaining that the figure had been lower in prior years.

Mr. Thomas stated that he found it unbelievable that the County continued to offer paid lunch hours for employees, as authorized in the recent Union contract negotiations. Mr. Kenny agreed, stating that the County could no longer compete in this manner and the issue should be addressed in future contract negotiations to remove this benefit. Mr. Payne added that this was not an equal benefit across the contract for all employees as those working at the Westmount Health Facility and the Department of Public Works were only allotted a 30 minute lunch break, while employees working in the Municipal Center and the Annex Buildings were given a full hour.

Mr. Phelps directed the Committee members to the Overtime Report which was included in the agenda. He advised that CPS and Foster Parent Training overtime costs had remained steady, while there had been an increase in overtime demand in other areas which was directly related to significant turnovers in staff and the time that it took to fill vacancies and properly train new employees. Mr. Phelps stated that they were currently in the process of interviewing for the last CPS Caseworker vacancy and hoped to fill the position shortly. He added that he anticipated a decrease in both the CPS backlog overtime and overtime related to CPS training with the addition of new staff.

Mr. Phelps advised that a Supervisor in Temporary Assistance had resigned unexpectedly and he anticipated a delay in filling the vacancy as a listing of eligible Civil Service tested candidates had yet to be established. He noted that the Temporary Assistance Supervisor position had been held by a very experienced person who had served as a working supervisor, handling many of the emergency assistance applications received. Mr. Phelps stated that the Food Stamp Program had also suffered a lack of staff as there had been a retirement from an Examiner position; however, he said, a replacement had been chosen for this position and was scheduled to begin on May 5, 2008. Mr. Phelps explained that the loss of the retiree, coupled with a significant growth in the food stamp caseload, had caused a backlog in the Food Stamp Program, which would be relieved once the new employee was in place.

Mr. Phelps stated that a need for overtime in the Support Unit had been experienced because the Supervisor of this Unit had required medical leave and had wanted to get all of her work up to date prior to her departure. He said that the Medicaid Division continued to be a challenge in overtime costs as there were three Medicaid Examiners who had only recently returned from extended medical leave. Mr. Phelps added that they were also able to fill one of the Examiner vacancies and training for the position had recently been completed. He said that the necessary resources for the Medicaid Division were now in place and he hoped to see diminishing overtime costs as a result.

Mr. Phelps stated that the Resource Unit had been working to purge records in preparation for the Imaging Project which would give additional space in the DSS Building and would reduce the costs of the new Health and Human Services Building in terms of storage space necessary. He added that authorization of overtime had been necessary for the Resource Unit to get the Imaging Project underway. In the Employment Unit, Mr. Phelps explained, they were struggling with vacancies of an Examiner and a Typist which led to overtime necessities. He said that a candidate had been chosen for the Examiner position and would begin on May 5, 2008, while interviews for the Typist position had been scheduled.

Pursuant to the review of the Overtime Report, Mr. Phelps advised that the agenda included a request for a transfer of funds in the amount of \$25,000 from Code A.6010.130, Salaries - Part Time, to Code A.6010.120, Salaries - Overtime, to cover the shortfall caused by excessive overtime costs.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request for transfer of funds, as outlined above, and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Phelps advised that the agenda included a copy of the Budget Performance Report, which he encouraged the Committee members to review at their leisure. He then began a detailed review of the DSS Annual Report, *a complete copy of which is on file with the minutes.* At the conclusion of his review, Mr. Phelps stated that he hoped the Committee had found the Annual Report both informative and useful as it included details on all of the public assistance available and costs incurred for the DSS. He added that the Annual Report was very important and that a considerable amount of time and effort was contributed to its development each year. Mr. Phelps welcomed the Committee members to contact him with any questions they might have with respect to the Annual Report prior to his retirement at the end of May.

Mr. O'Connor commended Mr. Phelps for his efforts in developing the Annual Report and he stated that of all of the reports received, Mr. Phelps' were the most informative and presentable. Mr. O'Connor then extended his best wishes to Mr. Phelps in his impending retirement.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously that executive session be declared pursuant to Section 105(f) to discuss the employment of a particular person.

Executive session was held from 11:41 a.m. to 11:53 a.m.

Upon reconvening, Mr. Tessier announced that no action was necessary pursuant to the executive session.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:54 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist